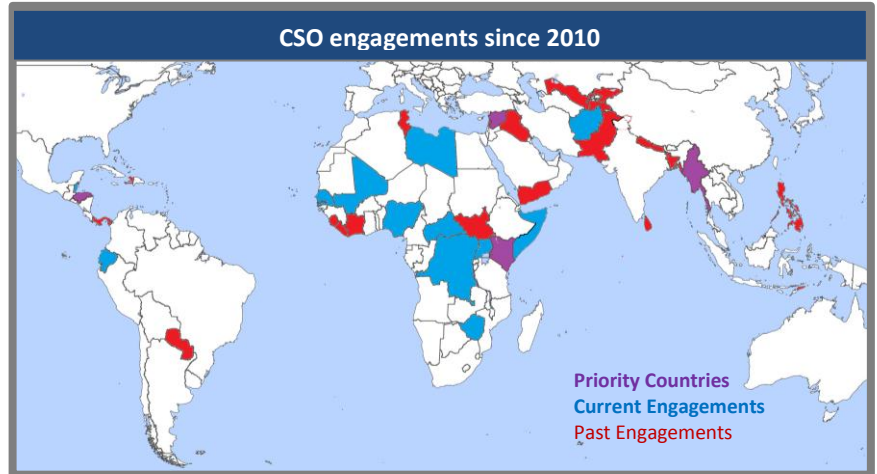




CSO: One-Year Progress Report

Summary

Founded on January 13, 2012, the State Department's [Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations](#) (CSO) helps the Secretary improve the effectiveness and coherence of the U.S. government's response to overseas crises. With the hard work of our staff, the efforts of State's regional and functional bureaus, and the cooperation of our interagency partners such as USAID and the Department of Justice, CSO made notable progress over the past year.



CSO addresses cycles of violence through locally-grounded analysis and operational support in priority areas around the world. The bureau works with a wide range of partners inside and outside of government to act as a catalyst in the first 12 months of a crisis or transition. CSO set three goals in its first year:

1. Make a clear impact in three or four places of strategic significance;
2. Build a respected team and trusted partnerships;
3. Be innovative and agile.

GOAL #1. Make an impact in three or four places of strategic significance:

In 2012, CSO focused 80 percent of its effort on four major engagements – Burma, Honduras, Kenya and Syria. CSO also worked in more than 15 other countries, including Afghanistan, Belize, the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Libya, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and South Sudan.

In Syria, CSO is focused on strengthening the unarmed opposition. Working from Turkey, CSO allocated \$23 million in program funds to:

- Enable the opposition to build mass communications and improve internal and external communications networks;
- Develop civilian leadership capacity for governance transition.

CSO co-funded the Syrian-run Office of Syrian Opposition Support, the hub for an expanding network of nearly 500 Syrian activists, administrators, and journalists. This connection provides insights about events inside Syria, expands assistance networks, and identifies local leaders. Through U.S., Canadian, and UK support, creative Syrian opposition TV ads and social media promote unity and tolerance among broad audiences.



In Kenya, where more than 1,000 people died and 350,000 people were displaced after the 2007 elections, CSO is integrating State Department efforts to help Kenyans prevent violence during the March 2013 election and potential runoff. CSO staff are assisting embassy efforts to build and focus Kenyan partnerships, particularly at the provincial and local levels. CSO supported existing local entities to organize nearly 50 Kenyans to establish a violence early-warning network in targeted hotspots.

In Honduras, where homicide levels are the highest in the world outside of war zones, CSO is sharpening Honduran efforts to reduce violence and address impunity through:

- Assistance for Honduran-created TV spots that show how citizens can help stem violence
- Support for government and NGO efforts to reform the police and the attorney general's office through confidence-building purges of corrupt officials and reform legislation
- Funding for a model community homicide-reduction initiative

In Burma, one of the last two countries still employing anti-personnel landmines, CSO is working with the government, ethnic minorities, and international partners to assist 5.2 million people living in landmine-contaminated areas. These efforts aim to build confidence through mine risk education and support to survivors of landmines.

GOAL #2. Build a respected team and trusted partnerships:

CSO has created a core leadership team, restructured more than 100 Civil and Foreign Service positions, and realigned more than 60 contracts.

CSO broadened its model of civilian response beyond internal staff and Civilian Response Corps members by creating a network of non-federal experts from sources such as nonprofits, third-country nationals, international partners, think tanks, and state and local officials. At a time of heightened global insecurity and fiscal constraint, the most exciting innovation is the large-scale engagement of local citizens and organizations, as in Kenya. CSO's flexible staffing mechanisms made this approach possible

The new team sought to surge the right people, at the right time, in the right places. Working with top leaders in Somalia's new government and local actors, a CSO stabilization expert helped leverage donor funds toward newly liberated areas. Separately, CSO deployed a small civilian team in central Africa to augment U.S. military efforts in generating defections and protecting civilians from Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army.

In addition, CSO leveraged local and international partnerships. In Burma, CSO is working closely with partners such as the UN and the Norwegian government. In Honduras, CSO supported U.S. rule of law efforts by working through the Organization of American States to support a Honduran public security reform commission. In Liberia, a single Department of Justice prosecutor helped a national investigation on election violence reach a dramatic and successful conclusion.

GOAL #3. Be innovative and agile:

With a goal of devoting 70 percent of its budget to operations, CSO moved swiftly to chart a new course, capture resources, and reorganize staff and civilian surge mechanisms for the next generation of conflict-prevention and response.

- By August 2012, CSO closed one of its three offices and a warehouse, saving \$6.5 million.
- CSO conserved an additional \$13 million by shifting the interagency Civilian Response Corps toward eventual reliance on a pay-as-you-use model.
- CSO identified \$30 million in unobligated 1207 program money and worked with 1207 fund partners (DoD, USAID, State) to redirect funding to more urgent, strategic cases with real-time evaluation.
- By renegotiating per-diem and overhead rates for deployable contractors, CSO reduced annual costs by as much as \$100,000 per contract.
- CSO adopted mechanisms to disburse grant funds more quickly.

In analysis and operations, CSO is increasing creativity.

- To improve anticipation and crisis response, CSO is employing big-data analytic models. CSO now uses the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency's Integrated Crisis Early Warning System, which aggregates more than 20 million news stories to identify trends in conflict at local, national, and regional levels. CSO also employs social networking for early warning and for gaining insights from partners inside and outside the U.S. government.
- Regular tabletop exercises helped sharpen policy choices in Burma, Mali, South Sudan, Sudan, Zimbabwe, and elsewhere.
- CSO boosted its online communications and now has 1,464 Twitter followers, 423 Facebook "likes," and a newsletter that reaches 18,000 readers. In Kenya, the Champions of Peace Facebook group gained 58,000 members within weeks of introduction. A similar success is taking shape in Syria.

CSO's engagements leveraged local change agents to increase speed, sustainability, and impact. As part of the U.S. effort to plan for a transition in Syria and prevent sectarian violence, CSO uses its growing network of Syrian trainees and contacts to monitor developments in crucial areas inside Syria. In Kenya, CSO supports an array of NGOs in the Rift Valley that are organizing tens of thousands of civilians to provide early warning of and response to election-related violence.

Entering its second year, the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations has strengthened its ability to advance the U.S. government's foreign policy goals in conflict areas. CSO will continue to work to enhance its effectiveness.
